

Human Relations Commission Work Plan Objective #1
Mills Place Plaque
Draft Plaque Language for Commission Review

This plaque is dedicated to the resilience and perseverance of Chinese settlers who, like so many before them, bestowed dignity and grace upon American soil.

In the mid-19th century, Chinese Americans performed grueling labor to construct one of the nation's greatest transportation and engineering accomplishments—the Overland Railroad. After its completion, these settlers journeyed throughout California, giving way to generations of Chinese Americans that worked as ranch hands, cooks, business owners, fruit pickers, and more. It was through this voyage of profoundly admirable work that a Chinese-owned wash house came to be. However, it was through xenophobia and prejudice that it would thereafter be set ablaze.

In a display of superiority over the Chinese settlers, the wash house was burned down by a racist mob, and history has documented that roughly 60-100 Chinese-Americans were posed with fleeing, or being lynched. Not long thereafter, a resolution was passed by white Pasadenans barring those of Chinese descent from living in the area near Orange Grove and Lake Avenue, between California Street and Mountain Street.

This plaque acknowledges the solemn denial of freedom and equity these settlers faced, and recognizes their sacrifice in making Pasadena the thriving multicultural, multilingual, multiracial city it now is. From the ashes of intolerance, this tribute honors their fortitude, labor accomplishments, entrepreneurship, and contributions to innovation.